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ABSTRACT

The Advanced Studies Program (ASP) at Southeastern Community College (Whiteville, North Carolina) is a developmental studies program that offers freshman courses in English, biology, and psychology to approximately 75 students. Learning activities are individualized and self-paced, and each ASP course has behaviorally stated objectives. Instructional techniques include the use of self-instructional packages, programmed materials, and various audio-tutorial aids. Through these individually styled instructional components, and reality-based counseling strategies, ASP attempts to internalize the external orientations of nontraditional students, thus greatly enhancing their chances of academic success. Rotter's Locus of Control Scale was administered to 77 freshmen prior to ASP enrollment. These students were given the scale again at the end of the first and third quarters. Of the 77 students entering ASP, 60 completed the spring quarter (77.9 percent). This persistence rate is higher than those reported by Monroe (1972) for community college students in general. Control orientation for ASP students generally shifted toward greater internality, and grade point averages improved with gains in internality. Recommendations are made for further research, and a bibliography is appended. (NHM)

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REALITY THERAPY AND PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION: A SUCCESS STORY

by

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JC 750 603

A nationwide ongoing argument among community college educators and other persons in the helping professions persists. The argument centers around whether or not academic failure can be attributed to individuals or system deficiencies. The more conservative one is, the more that person argues for individual deficiency. The more liberal one is, the more that person argues for system deficiencies. The truth probably lies somewhere in between the two extremes. It is rare that an academic program is designed around the assumption that both arguments have validity. However, such is the case in the Advancement Studies Program (ASP) at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville, North Carolina.

In September of 1972, the ASP began its fourth year of operation. ASP is a developmental studies program that offers freshman courses in English, Biology, and Psychology to approximately 75 students.

The ASP uses the following as its underlying principles of operation:

1. to place the student at the center of the learning process by increasing learning activity options and providing opportunities for students to design portions of the curriculum;

2. to recognize and respond to individual differences in skills, values, and learning styles through a flexible curriculum which permits learning at different rates and in different ways;

3. to relate to students with openness and respect and to provide a supportive climate for learning;

4. to provide students positive reinforcement and opportunities for success experiences;

5. to provide a curriculum which will be experiential and process-oriented;

6. to provide an interdisciplinary approach to the teaching-learning process; and

7. to make the community an extension of the classroom (Spann, 1972; Roueche, 1973).

To implement their operating principles, the ASP chose to use those instructional techniques that have been suggested as appropriate to the student for whom developmental programs are designed (Roueche, 1972; Moore, 1970). Students are allowed to progress at their own rate of learning. Each course within ASP has behaviorally stated objectives. Learning activities are individualized, and instructional methods include the use of self-instructional packages, programmed materials, and various audio-tutorial methods. And, finally, student feedback is elicited at appropriate times.

A further aspect of the program which the literature supports is the formulation of a counseling component (Roueche, 1973). The assumptions underlying ASP's counseling component and the way in which it is operationalized are new to community college developmental programs. Therefore, the focus of this report will be on those assumptions and counseling constructs and the evaluation of the integration of those constructs within the total ASP design in terms of student outcome at the end of the program.

The student typically served by developmental programs has been characterized as one who is academically unprepared, lacking in motivation and deficient in self-confidence. In addition, he is viewed as having a poor self-concept and lacking in self-esteem (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966; Roueche, 1973; Cross, 1972). Another way of characterizing him fits the conceptualization of the "failure identity" described by William Glasser (Glasser, 1972).

A further conceptualization is the one espoused by Julian Rotter (1966) concerning internal versus external locus of control. Internal-external locus of control refers to the extent to which persons perceive contingency relationships between their actions and their outcomes. Those who believe that they do have some control over their destinies are called "internals,"--i.e., they believe that some control resides within themselves. "Externals," on the other hand, believe that their outcomes are directed by agents or factors extrinsic to themselves,--e.g., fate, luck, powerful others.

Some of the research on the locus of control variable suggests that the personality correlates of externally oriented people are similar to those mentioned frequently in describing disadvantaged students (Mink, 1971).

The assumption then that ASP makes is that the counseling strategy used in working with their students should be one which will produce shifts in their students from externality to internality. The resultant expectation is that students will be better able to achieve academically. This assumption is supported by several studies that show that academic achievement goes hand in hand with internality (Coleman, et al., 1966; McGhee & Crandall, 1968; Lessing, 1969; Nowicki & Roundtree, 1971).

The counseling strategies described by Dua (1970), Masters (1970), Reimanis and Schaeffer (1970), Majumder, et al., (1973), and Williams (1970) all mention processes of proven value in working with externally oriented people. These strategies encourage the development of internality within which a person can realize self-directed success and experience the relationship between behavior and its contingencies.

However, since single techniques by themselves often miss the mark, ASP decided to use the therapy model developed by William Glasser (1965, 1971, 1972). According to Mink (1974), Glasser's Reality Therapy model focuses upon the essential elements of all of the studies to date on strategies for eliciting locus of control shifts.

To summarize up to this point, then, ASP attempts to take those students who are non-traditional learners and who for the most part have external orientations and shift them to a more internal orientation. Through the individually styled instructional components and the reality based counseling strategies, ASP hopes to produce students who will have their chances for success in school greatly enhanced..

The evaluation of the effects of ASP on its students is centered in the answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between Internal-External Control and Grade Point Average?
2. What is the persistence of students in ASP, especially those who are externally oriented?
3. What happens to those students who have shifts in their level of control from external to internal or vice-versa?

It is hoped that the results will lend some validity to the efficacy of the assumptions, counseling constructs, and instructional methods utilized by ASP.

METHOD

Each student prior to enrollment was given Rotter's Locus of Control Scale. The scale is a 29 item, forced choice questionnaire. Twenty-three of the items offer choices between internal and external belief statements while the other six items are fillers and not scored.

Originally, students with scores of 10 or above were considered to be externally oriented and subsequently enrolled in ASP. Likewise, those who scored below 10 were considered to be internally oriented. Statistically, however, a student is not considered to be highly externally motivated unless his score is 13 or above. The students, 77 in all, were given the scale again at the end of the first quarter and at the end of the third quarter which completed the academic year.

RESULTS

Locus of Control and Grade Point Average

A Pearson's correlation was computed to measure the correlation between a student's locus of control score and his grade point average over a similar time period. The correlation was -.287 indicating that as externality increased the grade point average decreased. This correlation was significant at the $p = .02$ level.

Persistence

The overall persistence rates were as follows:

1. Of the original 77 students entering ASP, 60 completed the quarter. Rate: 77.9%
2. Of the 60 who finished the spring quarter, 37 enrolled at Southeastern and 3 at other colleges. Rate: 66.7%

The persistence rates are higher than those reported by Monroe (1972) for community junior college students in general. The rates are also consistent with the rates found in other community college developmental programs (Roueche, 1973).

The persistence rates for those students who were tested for locus of control prior to entry into ASP were as follows:

1. Of the 28 who were externally oriented, 19 remained in school for the entire academic year. Rate: 67.8%

2. Of 30 who were internally oriented, 23 remained in school for the entire academic year. Rate: 76.7%

Considering the previously mentioned link between external orientation and achievement, it is not too surprising to find that more internals remained in school than externals. The important point is that both rates were high.

Locus of Control Shifts and Persistence

For those students who were intially tested for locus of control, their persistence was related to whether or not they had increased, decreased, or had remained stable in their control orientation. Table I shows what happened to those students who were considered statistically to be highly externally oriented (13 and above on the scale). As can be seen, 13 out of the 16 high E students remained in school, and the majority of those who did remain had decreases in the externality. A chi-square analysis was computed on this group and found to be significant at the $p = .02$ level.

TABLE I

Numbers of Students who Increased, Decreased, or Remained Stable in Their External Orientation

	Remained in School			Withdrew		
	Increase	Stable	Decrease	Increase	Stable	Decrease
Numbers of Students	3	2	8	1	0	2

Next, the same data was analyzed for those students who were recommended for ASP on the basis of an external score of 10 or above. The results,

as shown in Table II, indicate that of 32 students identified, 24 remained in school. Again, the majority of these students had decreased their externality. A chi-square analysis yielded significance at the p = .001 level.

TABLE II

Numbers of Students who Increased Decreased, or Remained Stable in Their External Orientation

	Remained in School			Withdrew		
	Increase	Stable	Decrease	Increase	Stable	Decrease
Numbers of Students	6	2	16	4	0	4

A final analysis determined what happened to those students who were considered to be highly internally motivated (10 or below on the scale.) Table III shows that of 28 students in the group, 23 remained in school. There were about as many increases as decreases for those who remained in school; but for those who withdrew, 4 out of 5 had decreased their internality scores. A chi-square analysis was significant at the p = .01 level.

TABLE III

Numbers of Students who Increased, Decreased, or Remained Stable in Their Internal Orientation

	Remained in School			Withdrew		
	Increase	Stable	Decrease	Increase	Stable	Decrease
Numbers of Students	10	1	12	1	0	4

CONCLUSIONS

With the high retention rates produced, ASP is clearly accomplishing something that is uncommon to the majority of community college developmental programs. As for students' grade point averages, the statistics at least bear out the fact that there is a significant correlation between low grades and external orientation.

There is supporting evidence, too, to suggest that shifts in externality scores towards greater internality are being produced in ASP. The evidence further suggests that students' persistence in school is related to changes that occur in their internal-external locus of control. However, there is not sufficient data to indicate how much individual effect either the counseling component or the instructional component is having on the total outcome. Perhaps that should be the focus of more sophisticated research than is presently available.

In conclusion, then, students in ASP did persist in school, control orientation for many of them did shift toward greater internality, and their grade point averages improved with gains in internality. If the assumptions and outcomes reported here are valid, then perhaps other community college developmental programs can develop "success identities" through the dual approach to counseling with students regarding personal failure orientations and designing a success oriented academic program.

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